

## MATTHEW 24

## SIGNS OF THE END

Having concluded His last public address before His death, which we read in the last chapter, Jesus now left the Temple (verse 1). As He left, His disciples began to admire its splendid glories; but “Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down” (verse 2). The Temple of Jerusalem was built of remarkably large stones, and this made it even more improbable that it should ever be utterly thrown down; but this very thing took place within a very short time from the day when these words were uttered.

The disciples, of course, were astonished at this prophecy. When they had an opportunity as Jesus was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, they came privately and asked Him, “When shall these things be?” They had heard Him speak many times of His coming again, and they imagined that He would then fulfill their views of worldly glory. Therefore, they asked Jesus – without well knowing of what they spoke – “What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (verse 3)

The answer that our Savior here gave applies to both parts of this question – both to His first coming to punish the Jews, and also to His second coming to judge all mankind at the end of the world; for the dealings of God with that single nation were intended to be a lesson for the rest of mankind. The signs of the destruction of their city and Temple were set down in such a manner that their fulfillment would be a warning of the approaching destruction of the whole world on that Great Last Day. Hence the disciples were told that before Jerusalem was destroyed, there would be wars, rumors of wars, famines, plagues, and earthquakes in various places. We know from history that these things did, in fact, take place around the time here signified; but they are also warning-signs of Christ’s second coming. However, let not our hearts be troubled! Let us be at peace with ourselves, because – through Jesus – we are at peace with God, even in the midst of tumults, confusion, and distress.

Just how near may be the end which we look for, it was not Christ’s purpose to reveal here. But He has set forth such signs of its approach as might put all generations on the watch for its arrival. In our own times, these signs demand our attention more than ever. Never before have there been made such active exertions for preaching “the gospel of the kingdom” “in all the world,” as “a witness unto all nations” (verse 14). Never has iniquity more abounded than now. We see enough, in the present state of things, to excite us to persevere un-

Outline of the chapter:

- ❖ The Lord Jesus foretells the destruction of the Temple – verses 1-3
- ❖ He foretells the troubles before the destruction of Jerusalem – verses 4-28
- ❖ He foretells other miseries that will transpire until His return – verses 29-41
- ❖ He exhorts His disciples to watchfulness – verses 42-51



to the end; and we see enough to encourage us in the cheerful hope that this end is not far off. For that coming of Christ, let us daily watch; and yet let us also wait for it patiently, however long it may be delayed. God will, in His good time, fulfill His Word of truth. And he that shall endure unto the end, in faith and in love – “the same shall be saved!” (verse 13)

Let us observe how the certainty of the return of Christ is pressed upon our attention. Just as by the putting forth of fresh leaves on a tree, we know that summer is near; so also, by the first part of this prophecy being fulfilled in relation to the destruction of Jerusalem, we may tell that the rest will surely follow at the end of this world. Just as surely as Jerusalem was made desolate, it is just as certain that “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). However firm this universe seems to be, the Word of Christ is even more sure – that Word which has pronounced of heaven and earth that they “shall pass away.”

“But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only,” said Jesus. God has not revealed to anyone at what time Christ will come to judgment. And when He does come, most people will be as they were in the days of Noah – occupied in the common business and enjoyments of this earthly life. How much the more, therefore, should we labor and pray that we may be always influenced by Christian grace! How we ought to pray that in our business, we may not be slothful; but “fervent in spirit, serving the Lord!” In our enjoyments, may we beseech the Lord for grace to be sober, heavenly-minded, and rejoicing “in the Lord alway” (Phil. 4:4). And as we are here told that out of two in the same field or at the same mill, “the one shall be taken and the other left” – this is to show us that in that day, God will be no respecter of persons; for in every condition and occupation of life, some will be saved, and some will sadly be lost.



“Watch therefore” is the great practical lesson with which our Lord concludes the prophecy of His coming to judgment (verses 42-51). “Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.” The duty is difficult, but the reason is plain. If we do not know when He is to come, how else can we be ready for Him, except by continual watchfulness? Not only are we uncertain as to when He will come, but He will come at an hour when we think that He will not. If we do not watch, we shall be overtaken by death and judgment – unprepared! Let us pray for grace and strength to keep us watchful and ready for His glorious return, when we shall join Him forever in the heavenly Kingdom above.

*Lord Jesus, we pray for grace to heed Your warning at the end of this chapter, and to watch for Your return! We beseech You to keep us alert and active in Your service, so that the day of Your coming may not creep up on us unawares. Amen.*